

# **PROPOSAL**

**To Seek Approval of an Implementation  
Plan for the Comprehensive Worker  
Credentialing for Alabama**

**Submitted to:**

**The Alabama State Workforce  
Development Planning Council**

**By:**

**The Worker Credentialing Implementation  
Task Force**

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## **Career Readiness Credential Service Delivery Plan**

The mission of the Career Readiness Credential System is to improve Alabama workers' job skills by implementing a statewide worker certification program. The ultimate goal is not to issue a career readiness credential but to improve employability and begin a process of on-going skill upgrades and lifelong learning. A secondary purpose is to better orient education and training programs toward applied job skills outcomes. The System provides multiple entry points at which individuals may access the system. The System also provides for many referral sources and targeted instruction providers including but not limited to career centers, adult education, secondary, and postsecondary education workforce development programs, vocational rehabilitation and faith based and other community work readiness programs.

The two customer groups that are being targeted in this initiative include: 1) individuals in need of training or documentation of skills before entering or re-entering the workforce and 2) employers who are seeking qualified employees. This guidance paper presents a model for using the ACT WorkKeys® system assessment and targeted instruction for issuing a "Career Readiness Credential" and Alabama Industrial Development Training *Institute's* "Alabama Certified Workers" credentialing process based on the Focused Industry Training (FIT) Curriculum and ACT WorkKeys® to address effectively the needs of these two customer groups. The process will be used to document what applicants know and can do and will provide an efficient method of addressing skill gaps identified. The resulting credentials/documents will be portable and recognized by business and industry within and outside of Alabama.

### **Providing WorkKeys Services to Customers**

This ACT WorkKeys system is a comprehensive approach to identifying workplace skill requirements and to assessing and improving skill attainment levels. The WorkKeys system is comprised of four components:

1. Pre-tests, which identify skill levels possessed;
2. Targeted instruction, which bridges the gap between skill levels possessed and skill levels needed;
3. WorkKeys assessment tests to provide verified ACT skill level scores; and
4. Job profiling, which identifies workplace skill levels needed for a specific job.

Three workplace skill areas will be addressed in the Career Readiness Certificate WorkKeys System:

- 1. Applied Mathematics**
- 2. Locating Information**
- 3. Reading for Information**

Career Centers will play a critical role in the pre-test and targeted instruction phase of the Career Readiness Certificate system. Several state agencies share responsibility for operating Career Centers and for providing services through the centers. In designing its One-Stop Career Center System, Alabama stressed avoiding duplication of services and redundant levels of bureaucracy. It is from this philosophy of efficiently utilizing the existing services of partners that this Career Readiness Certificate model was developed.

Adult participants not scoring at the designated readiness level and all WIA certified youth participants may proceed to individualized targeted instruction. Content of the targeted instruction is prescribed to meet Department of Labor credential requirements according to Training and Employment Guidelines Letter 28-04 making it a Workforce Investment Act accountability activity.

WorkKeys Service Centers and the Alabama Adult Education programs are located throughout the State and are readily accessible in all geographic regions. Although WorkKeys services are available at two-year colleges not licensed as Service Centers, only Service Centers and Adult Education programs funded through the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education can offer WorkKeys services.

Individuals may choose the option to pursue internet based pre-test and targeted instruction which will be provided through a state funded internet based system allowing maximum accessibility for service providers and their participants. Making this resource available to additional workforce development programs, such as vocational rehabilitation, faith based and other community work readiness programs provides greater accessibility to the credentialing system particularly in the outlying rural areas. These types of Work readiness programs choosing to participate will be assisted by and monitored through Adult Education.

The State Planning Council will establish a uniform state-wide price structure for WorkKeys services. Such services will include:

1. WorkKeys testing;
2. Test administration and scoring; and
3. Test score interpretation and technical assistance relative to career advising.
4. Issuing the Career Readiness Certificate

**Providing Career Readiness Certificate /**  
**Focused Industry Training Services to Customers**

For those participants in need of and able to take advantage of more intensive training, the Focused Industry Training program is designed to provide basic skills to entry level workers. The 400 hour training will be provided by postsecondary Adult Education at various training sites within the community colleges' regions. Targeted instruction includes skills training in Computer Literacy, Reading, Applied Mathematics, Applied Technology, Locating Information, Observation, and Teamwork. Workplace Essentials includes sessions on the following topics: Work Ethics, Critical Thinking Skills, Diversity, Sexual Harassment, Workplace Violence, and Workplace Safety. Training also includes basic manufacturing concepts including Precision Measurement, Principles

of Quality Manufacturing, and Lean Manufacturing, with additional skill training added as identified by local business and industry as necessary for entry level jobs within their companies. Enrollment into Focused Industry Training does not require a high school diploma or General Education Development credential and will allow trainees maximum flexibility in attaining required competency levels. After acquisition of all required competencies and completion of classroom time, trainees will receive designation from Alabama Industrial Development Training as a “Certified Alabama Worker” as well as a “Career Readiness Credential,” offered through the Alabama Adult Education program.

#### Focused Industry Training:

- Provides a certification of worker competencies through a competency-based training and assessment system.
- Prepares each trainee with the employability skills necessary to work in Alabama’s economy that are accepted and sought by Alabama industry.
- Provides the flexibility to meet the demands of a diverse industry base without diminishing the integrity of the training and assessment system.
- Provides the flexibility to meet the needs of trainees with varying skill and ability levels.
- Provides training that is aligned with Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and General Educational Development (GED).
- Provides a web-based assessment and management system as well as printed assessments where needed.
- Provides WorkKeys targeted instruction and Career Readiness Credential through the Alabama Dept. of Postsecondary Education.

#### **Procedures for Awarding Credential**

1. **Career Readiness Credential (CRC)** will be assessed in WorkKeys Applied Mathematics, Reading for Information, and Locating Information assessments. Individuals scoring a minimum of level three will be issued a CRC through postsecondary Adult Education or an ACT Service Center. Individuals may receive a bronze, silver, or gold credential based on their WorkKeys scores. (Bronze: score at

level three or above on all assessments. Silver: score at level four or above on all assessments. Gold: score at level five or above on all assessments.)

2. **Alabama Certified Worker (ACW)** will be provided through the Alabama Adult Education program at the completion of the Focused Industry Training program after verification through Alabama Industrial Development Training Institute that all criteria have been met. Focused Industry Training program content will meet Department of Labor Credential requirements as outlined in Training and Employment Guidance Letter 28-04. All FIT Participants will be provided targeted instruction to obtain a minimum of a level 3 Career Readiness Certificate on their final assessment. Focused Industry Training participants will receive an assessment through Alabama Dept. of Postsecondary Education for attainment of a minimum level 3 Career Readiness Certificate.

### **WorkKeys Services for Employers Seeking Employees**

An important component of the Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) initiative is the involvement of business and industry. To benefit from the Career Readiness Certificate, business and industry should be encouraged to develop job profiles to have specific skill information for their company. Employers may use previously determined skill levels for jobs from the WorkKeys Occupational Profiles database in order to obtain a general idea of skills needed. However, the employer should have a job profiled by the ACT process in order to obtain specific guidelines for the selection of employees who have the skills to perform the job.

In order to encourage profiling by Alabama businesses and industries, the initiative will:

- Provide state funds for a limited number of profiles.
- Allocate profile funds to existing ACT Centers to conduct profiles.
  - *ACT WorkKeys Service Centers* should be allowed to use funds for their own or contract profilers.
  - *ACT WorkKeys Service Centers* without staff profilers may contract with other *ACT WorkKeys Service Centers* to complete profiles.

- Offer a limited number of subsidized profiles to businesses who support the Career Readiness Certificate.
- Make available a database of job profile data to Alabama businesses along with ACT's WorkKeys Occupational Profiles.
- Control the distribution and use of profiling funds so that funds will be equally allocated to those areas of the state that may have had limited success with WorkKeys previously. Reallocate funds to other *ACT WorkKeys Service Centers* if they are not being used for profiling.
- Encourage those industries with authorized profiles to use the Career Readiness Certificate when considering applicants for jobs.

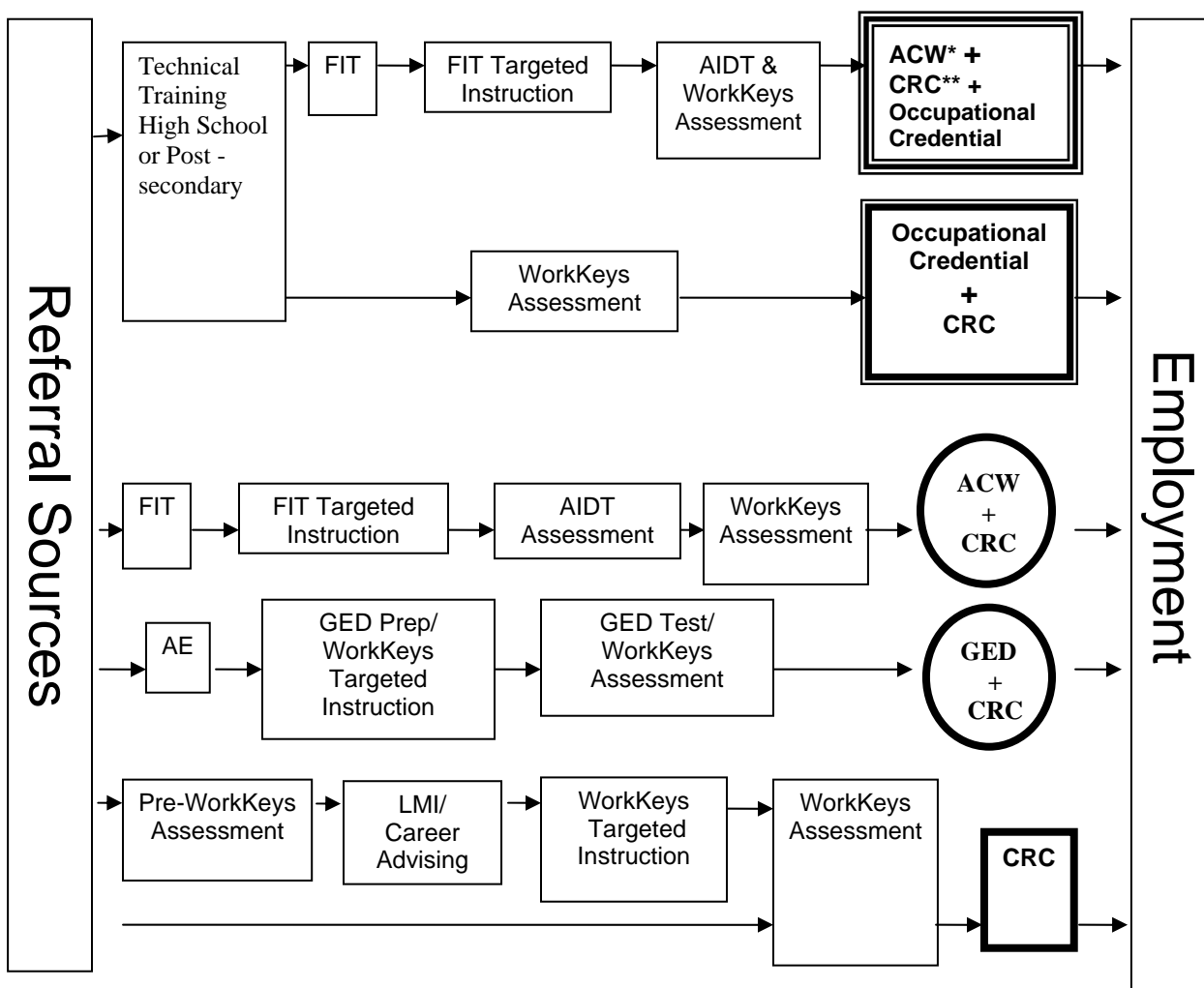
Career Centers and the Alabama Postsecondary Education will make available WorkKeys system services to employers seeking qualified workers. All WorkKeys test scores will be entered into a database maintained by the Office of Workforce Development. WorkKeys test score data will also be accessible through the Alabama JobLink system maintained through the Department of Industrial Relations. Career Center staff will use the database to help employers identify potential employees.

Employers will also have access to a WorkKeys job profiler database. This database will include names and contact information on all job profilers in the state who have given permission for such distribution. The Office of Workforce Development will be responsible for maintaining the job profiler database as a service to employers in assessing the skill levels and training needs associated with various jobs they are seeking to fill.

### **WorkKeys/FIT Services for Economic Developers**

Staff of the Alabama Development Office, Chambers of Commerce, and various local and regional economic development agencies will have access to the WorkKeys / Focused Industry Training database. WorkKeys test scores will be made available to compare WorkKeys skill levels of job seekers in a local area with the skill levels of occupations of potential new industries.

## **CREDENTIALLED WORKER CLIENT FLOW CHART**



**FIT** = **Focused Industry Training**  
**AIDT** = **Alabama Industrial Development & Training**  
**ACW** = **Alabama Certified Worker**  
**CRC** = **Career Readiness Credential**  
**AE** = **Adult Education**  
**LMI** = **Labor Market Information**